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Changes should be made in college requirements or recommendations in Latin more slowly than they are in the English requirements, but in the same way; now one work should be substituted, now another. What a benefit would not this simple expedient bring about in the wider and more varied reading of teachers, by which their knowledge of Latin would be extended, their teaching power enforced, and fresh enthusiasm gained!

Will not classical teachers unite to bring about a change so simple, so reasonable, so helpful, so much to be desired?

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THE CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR THE SUCCESSFUL TEACHING OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Prof. Wendell very happily touches* the main difference between the teaching of English and the teaching of the other subjects of secondary and upper education. English, he shows, is not a specialty, but the accomplishment of all educated persons, whatever their employment or social position. Everything else is a mystery; its devotees are special craftsmen. The chemist may ignore astronomy and history, and forget his Greek. The linguist cares nothing for political economy. But chemist, linguist, astronomer and historian must all pay homage to their English, and, at least as students in the secondary range of education, must undergo the same training, and with the same ends in view. Only the student of philology proper has a justification for specializing his English. But the philology of the native language is a science quite unconcerned with the power of expression and of literary interpretation.

The student of English seeks to become acquainted with that which everybody knows. The student of every other subject seeks

* In his paper on "English in Secondary Schools," read before the New England Association of College and Preparatory Schools, at New Haven, Oct. 14, 1893.

to become initiated in an art or a science that only a few know. He who studies the higher mathematics soon finds himself walking with but a select handful of companions. The case is almost the same in the upper regions of any science. Increasing specialization isolates and concentrates, creating bonds of attachment and sympathy between the individuals of the small bands whom it segregates from the great public of active minds. English—not now viewed as philology—cannot properly have any devotees at all, any more than good manners, or veracity, or general probity of life can have special devotees.

What consequences to the English teachers and to English teaching flow from this most fundamental difference between the study of English and all other studies? If peculiar difficulties seem to beset the teaching of English, is it not possible that the cause of some of these difficulties is to be found in the nature of this teaching?

One of the troubles about the English that everybody knows is that everybody learns his English by absorption from his environment and not under scholastic discipline. For his Latin, his physics, his music, the boy is beholden entirely to the school; having no theories of his own to urge, and no practices of his own to oppose to the reception of good teaching. But his English he brings with him; and even after he is enrolled in your classes, he still goes on learning additional English from other sources at a rate infinitely more rapid than he learns it from you.

Pupils come to the secondary school already in possession of vigorous powers of expression. They can both write and speak. The English that everybody knows they also know in great measure, and are coming to know more fully as they come more into contact with life, whether they are distinctly taught English or not.

Evidently, therefore, if the English which the pupils know in advance is a sufficiently good English, the English teacher, as a teacher of expression, is superfluous: in the case of such pupils nature has forestalled the school. These are the ideal pupils. The things that everybody knows, the things that are in the air of good society and good literature, they know, and have not to be taught. Nor were they, at any time in their lives, especially taught these things, having imbibed them unconsciously from their

associations. Moreover, they know these things, not as formulas which they can repeat on demand, or as rules that they can cite by number, but as ingrained and ineradicable habits; so that they may be said, in one sense, not to know them at all, so well do they know them, so true is it that they know them without knowing that they know them.

There are such pupils; there are even schools filled with them—schools in which the English is so good that it need not be taught, and in which, therefore, it is not taught: not taught, that is, formally and pedagogically, as a subject of the course of study, but still taught, of course, essentially, as it cannot help being, by contact and association.

The things that everybody knows are, by their very nature, chiefly to be taught by example, as they were originally learned, rather than by precept and text-book, the last resort of incapable teachers. The rules of good writing that have any proper place in the secondary school may be printed on a single page. It is not knowledge of rules, or any other knowledge, that is fundamental to the business of acquiring a mastery of English expression. Given a very few principles capable of being formulated for ready application, the school is to go to work to enforce these principles by arousing motives and spurring youthful ambitions. To learn the rules by heart, to recite them daily, to hear lectures on their importance, will avail nothing. It is pitiful to see the trust in text-books of rhetoric, in books of *exercises* in English, shown by the practice of schools that adopt bulky volumes, and try to labor through them against all reason and in defiance of human nature.

It is useless to argue that while this doctrine may do very well for certain peculiar teachers, the *average* teacher needs a book of exercises and a rhetoric to keep him closely to his work. The conventional pedagogist will always be found hedging and skulking behind the average teacher. Too indolent himself to think broadly and to pursue his thought to its true issues, the routinist lays out for teachers and pupils an abundance of hard work by the simple plan of imposing on them a book that is to be gone through in a certain time. But for the performance of this task high school teachers are educated beyond the needs of the occasion and are paid altogether too much. The text-book of rhetoric is

simply an obstacle to every teacher, whether superior, average or inferior. The good teacher will accomplish something good in spite of the book; the poor teacher will accomplish nothing even with the book. Laborious study of rhetoric achieves acquaintance with the rhetoric, and nothing more. Such study has no tendency to transmute itself into habit. If habit is indeed affected for good while such study is in progress, it is solely because the teacher has made his influence felt beneficially; and this influence he could impart far more generously could he avail himself of the natural and fruitful times and occasions, and could he free his own mind and the minds of his pupils from the necessity of preparing for examinations. The teacher who has no personal influence cannot be a good teacher of English, though he may be a fair drill-master in Latin. For there is mystery about Latin, which secludes it from daily use and keeps it altogether aloof from the sphere of personal habit and useful accomplishment. Latin is one of the things that but few know, and which it is exceedingly bad form to parade in public. English, like good manners and social usages, is one of the things that all know, and which it is exceedingly bad form not to be willing to put in evidence on the daily occasions of life.

The Latin teacher who asks himself how he shall teach his pupils all that needs to be known about the *oratio obliqua*, that they may be able, in their exercitations, to narrate obliquely without fault, sets himself a very difficult task. He has an opportunity that calls for the exercise of the utmost skill and for a considerable amount of special knowledge. The case is a perfectly good type of the pedagogic cleverness required in all the subjects of the curriculum except English. To get an illustration as concrete as possible of the nature of English teaching, let us take that most humble department of it—spelling. The *oratio obliqua* is a piece of apparatus in the academic palestra. It is always left in the academy at graduation. But English spelling is a thing that everybody knows, or confesses his obligation to know,—a thing that everybody expects to use during all his life. The English teacher of spelling has no occult problem before him. His task is simply to get a boy who has a dictionary at his elbow to look up the words he uses and copy their spelling in his writing. Can a humbler, simpler function be conceived? The teacher's aim,

with regard to English spelling, is to induce youth to practice the habit of looking up words till they acquire the resultant habit of correct spelling without painful effort.

The Latin teacher has to devise ways and means of illustration and elucidation. The English teacher has to supply motive and stimulate resolution. The Latin teacher asks, How can I explain this difficulty. The English teacher asks, How can I make it seem to those boys worth their while to take pains with their English. Each teacher has a genuine problem; but the two problems differ *toto cœlo*.

It is obvious that the teacher of a subject inherently difficult and special must bring to bear on his task all possible skill and adroitness; while the teacher of a subject inherently easy and general must avail himself of the public spirit of the school or of the enthusiasm that he can inspire in his class. In other subjects pupils will get their lessons as a matter of course, because they have adjusted themselves to the routine. They will spell and capitalize and punctuate their English correctly, and add to it the corollaries of clearness, force, and elegance, whenever they shall feel an inner prompting to please. Many a youth and many a maid have postponed the application of intense effort to the production of good written English until the methods of the business college or the usual exigencies of the editorial or the mercantile office have furnished them a motive that the school had never known how to bring to bear.

To teach a special subject well requires special knowledge and special skill. To teach an easy general subject well requires common knowledge, but infinite patience and unremitting watchfulness. The specialty demands personal and private qualities; the general subject demands a wholesome atmosphere and a prevailing high standard of ambition. The specialist, working his way through difficulties, needs to summon all his tact. The teacher of the general subject is powerless unless he is aided by a general high tone. Thus the specialist is fairly independent of the aims and methods of his colleagues; but the English teacher is altogether at the mercy of the general tone or public spirit of the school as ascertained by his colleagues collectively and by all the other agencies that affect the prevailing animus. The chief requisite for the production of a piece of well written English is

such a mental equipment in its writer as is described by the expressions, love of beauty and order, desire to please, self-respect. In other words English depends on tone, on *morale*.

Cleverness prepares best for examinations: but examinations may be best prepared for in the poorest school. Examinations are hostile to tone, for they tend to specialize still further the very specialties themselves. This they do by confining attention to narrow ranges of anticipated questioning. It is a maxim of unfailing application in education that wherever there are examinations there is preparation for them; and preparation for examinations is inconsistent with good *morale*. One of the sorriest spectacles afforded by modern school life is of pupils tumultuously getting up some neglected subject of a coming college examination, resorting to extrinsic aids and studying past examination papers, as if they were so adding to the sum of their training and becoming fitter for college. The practice of cramming has been defended as fostering some sort of smartness or alertness; and this effect it may indeed have. Nevertheless it is especially injurious to tone.

For good tone in a school involves, as of its very essence, painstaking, carefulness, the study of beauty, of form, of symmetry. A pupil should no more be willing to present a slovenly manuscript than he would to appear untidy in person or coarse of speech. Where tone is high, each individual always does his best; and only where each one does his best is there any likelihood of homage to the amenities. Good tone expresses itself, of course, in many other parts of school and college life besides the English. But of the subjects grouped in the course of study, no other so peculiarly serves as index of the prevailing tone; no other is so dependent on tone for all its prosperity.

Lack of tone among students shows itself in mental and moral dullness, or even in profligacy of life; and lack of tone among teachers shows itself in the adoption of *laissez-faire* theories of government and the abandonment of the moral supervision of their charge as a matter not included in their bond.

The mere specialist looks into his bond; and, as he finds there neither manners and morals nor English, he leaves these to the principal and to the English teacher. Bad English is not a bad thing in the physics class room; there the only bad thing is bad

physics. This description of the public spirit of many great schools is no caricature. The prevalent view of the duty of special teachers is that when exercises in their respective specialties are presented to them, they are to concern themselves solely with the content of these exercises and not at all with their form. Perhaps no English teacher has yet gone so far as to match this absurd misconception by adopting the corresponding opinion that his function is to deal solely with the form of compositions and not at all with their content.

The existence in a faculty of an English teacher who is a specialist of expression favors the indolence of the rest, who naturally come to regard themselves as authorized to surrender responsibility for a duty that is specially assigned to another. Thus the English teacher both makes and mars. Undoubtedly he mars far more than he makes. What he can do towards furthering zeal for good English expression is less than he undoes by exempting the other teachers from doing anything.

It would be a strange case if in a school only one teacher were particular about truthfulness, and all the other teachers passed over falsehood as a matter not within their province. It would be a strange case if only one teacher objected to rowdyism, and all the other teachers winked at it as a juvenile eccentricity beyond their control. There are some things in education which the individual educator cannot delegate, which are equally his concern whatever his speciality, whether they are nominated in his bond or not. The teacher who exerts no moral influence at all is no teacher at all.

Conceiving English more and more as a specialty, teachers have tended to withdraw from the duty of supervising it. Thus one man or woman is left in a school to be critical and particular about expression, the rest restricting themselves to being critical and particular only about the matter expressed. In this state of things precisely that happens to English which would happen to veracity were only one teacher out of a dozen to object to lying. English inevitably runs down where badness is tolerated by the majority: it has hard work to maintain its level where badness is tolerated by even one. A single easy-going teacher, with low ideals, perhaps with a contempt for the conventional decencies of life, but with tact in winning the favor of youth by indulging

their indolence, may effectually thwart the efforts of his united colleagues. The teacher who has contempt for spelling, for punctuation, for penmanship, for neatness of expression, being filled with a devouring enthusiasm for aorists, reactions, volts, specific gravities, or what not, is a well known phenomenon in education. In the higher education, narrow specialist as he is, and haughtily as he may look down upon the æsthetic conventions, he is doubtless wanted; for here habits are already formed and fixed, and young men in this stage must have learned to make their account with idiosyncrasies.

For the eccentric and unassimilable specialist, however, secondary education has no use. All the teachers of a secondary school must feel and act as one towards the things that everybody knows. The things that everybody knows are social usages and the rules, generally, for the conduct of life. The things that only a few isolated people know are the several branches arranged in the program of studies.

The misfortune of secondary English is that it finds itself on the wrong side. As soon as possible it must be transferred to the other. Secondary English belongs with social usages, and not with the recondite arts and sciences. Certainly some great evil has befallen our secondary English, for its condition, according to all the accounts, is inexpressibly dreadful. If any one person, such as a teacher of composition, is responsible for this state of things, all will agree that he should be summarily abolished as a disastrous failure: but the truth is that the teacher of composition is the least responsible of all the parties concerned—that he is, in fact, the very one who is not responsible at all, and that it is his colleagues *en masse*, and not he himself, that should be abolished. The specialists, that is to say, should, as specialists with regard to English, denying that they know it or have a duty towards it, be abolished; and in their stead should be engaged broader-minded specialists who acknowledge the same fealty to English expression that they, do if they are gentlemen and ladies, to manners and morals.

Practically, the problem is, to cause the spirit of English training to descend on all the members of each teaching body. If the tone of any school is low, this grand consummation cannot, of course, in that school, be achieved until the tone is elevated. If

the principal confesses he cannot inaugurate the reform, then there is no hope; he is principal in name but is no leader. The correction of compositions, of course, requires patience; but patience is not a special virtue. Spelling and punctuation, paragraphing and penmanship, are, to be sure, wretchedly low, plebeian functions compared with the teaching of paradigms; but he who teaches in a high school must stoop even to these humiliations.

In the arrangement of our secondary schools as now organized, English written by pupils comes under the eye of every teacher; so that the opportunity for taking cognizance of English writing is presented to every teacher in more than sufficient abundance. The simple question is, Shall each teacher exercise supervision over the form of this writing, correcting and admonishing and insisting, just as he does with regard to the subject matter of his department. For English is a thing that everybody knows, and to ignore it is to be disloyal to duty.

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FORMAL VS. CONCRETE STUDIES IN THE COLLEGE

The educated public is practically a unit in the opinion that the college should furnish a liberal education; in this demand there has been little change. But when we ask, What constitutes a liberal education? we find that the advanced thought of the present differs materially from the current ideas of forty years ago. Then the chief subjects were classics and mathematics; little else was taught.

Language is always the means by which we express thought, and mathematics the means by which we determine the quantitative relations of things. Evidently these are important subjects, for without language our thought would remain undeveloped, while without knowing how the quantity of one thing is related to that of others we should not be able to master the material world.